

ITALIAN RYEGRASS

Lolium perenne ssp.
multiflorum (Lam.) Husnot
plant symbol = LOPEM2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Northeast Plant Materials Program

Alternate Names

Lolium multiflorum Lam., annual ryegrass

Uses

Italian ryegrass is primarily used for quick cover in erosion control plantings.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Weediness

This plant may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office, or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use. Weed information is also available from the PLANTS Web site at plants.usda.gov.

Description

Italian ryegrass is quite similar to perennial ryegrass except it is an annual or biennial, depending on climate and/or length of growing season. It may grow a little taller than perennial ryegrass, from 2 to 3 feet tall. Plants have a bunchy form, with numerous long, narrow, stiff leaves near the base of the plant. The under surfaces of leaves are bright, glossy, and smooth. Inflorescence stems are nearly naked. The seeds of this sub-species have awns (bristles).

Adaptation

These grasses have a wide range of adaptability to soils, but thrive on dark rich soils in regions having mild climates. They do not withstand hot, dry weather or severe winters. They will stand fairly wet soils with reasonably good surface drainage.

Italian ryegrass is distributed throughout the entire United States. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment

A fine, firm seedbed gives the best results. Mulched seedlings on graded soil germinate readily. Spring seedlings of ryegrass may occur in March, April, or May. Seeding rates will vary with local conditions and purpose of plantings. Generally, a seeding rate of 20 to 25 pounds per acre is used if ryegrass is seeded alone. Lesser amounts per acre are used in mixtures, depending upon uses and companion species. Do not exceed 4 pounds per acre in mixes with alfalfa.

Management

This section is under development.

Pests and Potential Problems

This section is under development.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Ryegrasses cross-pollinate freely so many types have developed. It is difficult to maintain their genetic purity; consequently, Italian ryegrass is marketed as common ryegrass or domestic ryegrass, and it is often a mixture of annual and perennial species. There is no certification of this seed since pure varieties of Italian ryegrass are almost non-existent.

Seed of cultivars and common annual ryegrass is readily available from local commercial suppliers.

Control

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

Prepared By & Species Coordinator:

USDA NRCS Northeast Plant Materials Program

05Feb2002 JLK

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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